

107-207

TranslationLaiks, 27 July 1955, p.1 :

Mysterious Refugee in the Baltic Sea
Claims to have escaped from Latvia but has disappeared in Sweden without leaving a trace.

L o n d o n

" On Saturday ^{before} of the Whitesunday (Vasarsvētki - in Latv.; i.e. on 28 May - Transl.) I took up ^{from a small rubber boat} ~~to~~ my ship in the Baltic Sea a refugee from Latvia and five hours later the Swedish authorities took him over but afterwards I did ^{not} hear ^{anything} ~~nothing~~ about his fate ", asserted a captain of a Scandinavian steamer, interviewed by the correspondent of Laiks in London, thus presenting a riddle which up to now has got no answer.

The docks of the harbor of London are wide. Here is the meeting place for ships from the ^{entire} ~~whole~~ world. Here are also seamen from all the corners of the world. Look, one of them, a captain of a Scandinavian ship, who is known also to the Latvian seamen. And here is his story: " It occurred on Saturday of the Whitesunday. It was ten minutes past ten o'clock in the morning. The air was clear, the sea sunny, only the white tops of waves and the ~~the~~ barometer were announcing that a storm is approaching. The ^{seaman} ~~man~~-on-duty ran into my cabin and reported that somebody out in the sea is shouting for help... My vessel, having a course to the south, was in the vicinity of the Swedish coast and, when stepping out to the deck, I discovered by the binoculars a rather small rubber boat in the waves and a man in it who shouted and waved to us. I ordered the steersman to reduce speed and to approach the boat. Actually it was not a boat but a rubber raft of the kind which was used in wartime by the ~~the~~ ^{sailors} airmen and ^{sailors} instead of the life-boats. The raft was filled with water up to its edge and the man was sitting up to his waist in water.

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We lowered the ladder and the rescued skillfully climbed up to the deck but his rubber sailing vessel remained in the waves of the Baltic Sea.

The rescued was a man of about 35 years, had oblong, energetic face, was of ~~nixix~~ medium height. He had a grey homespun suit, working boots and a cap with a peak. He spoke fluently German and was in command of some English too. He told that he is coming from Latvia, from Almenstrags (5650 2103 on Latvian Army Map 1: 200.000 - Transl.). Told that he had set off for the sea in the rubber boat two days ago. Really, he was unshaved, had a beard of about two days. He told that he had been threatened by danger, arrest or deportations. But here I caught doubts because when I offered him a meal, he refused and accepted only a cup of coffee. He had an identity card (personas apliecība - in Latv.), issued by the Soviet authorities, in his pocket."

When asked by the correspondent of Laiks about the name of the escapee, the captain replies that he has forgotten it but there was a definite feeling that he does not want to mention this name since it is known that the ship's log book contains all happenings, thus ~~nixx~~ this reception of the refugee on the ship too, and the log book thus should contain also this name all the same whether it is a true one or assumed. The captain continued:

" The refugee had not rough hands, and he had the appearance of a technician, mechanic or auto mechanic. He had no weapons and he told that he had wanted to escape from Latvia and now he has accomplished it. The radio operator of the ship meanwhile got in contact with the ^{Swedish} frontier guards, we stopped at the ^{set} harbor and in the afternoon of the same day we handed over the escapee to the Swedish authorities. I have ^{not} heard ^{anything} ~~nixix~~ about him since then. I have found nothing about the escapee either in the Swedish or European newspapers. Maybe the Latvian newspapers have ~~xxxx~~ by chance any information about this man ?" asked the captain. " No ? ", he repeated my answer and continued then: " Well, this matter is not so

simple as you might believe. After having rescued him we gave him dry clothes. These clothes I received recently back in a parcel which was ~~xxxxxxx~~ mailed from the post office in Stockholm. A person with a Swedish surname was given as the sender there and it was addressed to my shipping company. If he were only a refugee then the Swedish police, after the lapse of the quarantine time, would let him go free by ^{granting} ~~giving~~ him the rights of a political refugee or expell him but nobody of us ~~do~~ knows what happened to ~~xxxx~~ this man. He seemed to be intelligent, was talkative and he had something important.

What was this "something important", the captain did not want to reveal. Why? It is understandable that the captain asked not to mention his and his ship's name, because the steamer is sometimes sailing to harbors behind the Iron Curtain, Danzig and Gdynia and Stettin, but what was that which prohibited the captain to mention the name of the rescued and this "something important".

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